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ABSTRACT

The status of women's studies courses in teacher education was studied through the survey responses of 111 coordinators and directors of women's studies programs at colleges and universities. The findings were that 47 of the institutions offered women's studies courses in teacher education and that few teacher education programs had attempted to integrate women's studies into the curriculum. It is noted that the lack of such courses is a serious problem which merits the attention of both women's studies specialists and teacher educators. In reviewing respondents' reasons for not offering women's studies courses in teacher education, lack of receptivity and expertise on the part of teacher education faculty was cited. It is recommended that responsibility needs to be assumed by both women's studies and teacher education program directors. It is suggested that, although women's studies have historically been housed in, and more oriented to, the liberal arts curriculum, there can be heightened awareness of the needs and importance of women's studies in teacher education programs. Among conclusions drawn is that teacher educators will sometimes need to take the initiative in requesting assistance from women's studies programs in the development of courses or in integrating women's studies throughout the curriculum. (JD)

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Women's Studies Courses in Teacher Education

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WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The growth and development of women's studies programs has been a significant trend in higher education in the past decade. The proliferation of women's studies courses has been most pronounced in liberal arts curricula with less visibility in teacher education programs. This is a somewhat puzzling phenomenon. If women's studies is to become an integral component of education at all levels, teacher education would be a natural facilitator. Furthermore, the growing body of professional education literature related to sex-role stereotyping and other women's equity issues offers potentially valuable content for a women's studies curriculum in teacher education.

If it can be assumed that colleges and universities with established women's studies programs would provide especially fertile ground for the development of related courses in teacher education, it would seem useful to investigate the status of these institution's women's studies courses in teacher education. Such information could increase awareness of the responsibilities of women's studies and teacher education while providing some impetus and direction for mutual goal-setting and planning.

To assess the status of women's studies courses in teacher education, survey instruments were sent to 228 coordinators/directors

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of women's studies programs at colleges and universities throughout the United States.[1] The 228 programs were those identified in the Women's Studies Quarterly[2] which offered teacher education programs.[3]

The two-page survey instrument was designed to collect data on women's studies programs which both offered and did not offer a course in teacher education. In the analysis, these two groups were examined comparatively to provide insights which would give direction for future women's studies teacher education curriculum development.

Demographic and descriptive information was elicited from those who offered teacher education courses. Those who did not offer courses were asked to identify the reason(s) for this omission. Both groups responded to items seeking information on other professionally useful women's studies courses and on the status of mainstreaming/integrating women's studies curriculum content into other courses in education.

One hundred and eleven survey instruments were returned. Of these, 47 indicated that they offered a women's studies course in education. Sixty-four of the respondents offered

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[1]This survey was conducted as part of a project supported by the author's W.K. Kellogg Fellowship at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois.

[2]Elaine Reuben and Florence Howe, compilers, "Women's Studies Programs - 1981," Women's Studies Quarterly 9:2 (Summer 1981), pp. 25-32.

[3]The College Blue Book, 18th. Edition, Degrees Offered by College and Subject (New York: Macmillan (1981)).

no such course.

An examination of the comparative student enrollments of institutions both offering and not offering women's studies courses in teacher education showed distinct differences between the two groups. Enrollment figures are presented in Table I.

TABLE I
TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Enrollment	Percentage of Institutions	
	With Course	With No Course
Under 1,000	0	5
1-10,000	26	55
10-20,000	36	23
20,000+	38	17

In comparing the enrollment of institutions which offer women's studies courses in teacher education with those which do not, a relationship became apparent. The institutions which offered women's studies courses in teacher education were most frequently those with the largest enrollment (20,000+) while the institutions which did not offer a course were most frequently in a lower enrollment category (1-10,000).

The 47 institutions with women's studies courses in education offered a total of 66 different courses. Of these 66 courses, 35% were restricted to undergraduates; 24% were restricted to graduates and 41% were open to both. Only three of these courses were requirements for some program. One (a course in multicultural, nonsexist education) was a general teacher education requirement. Another was a requirement for a social studies teaching program and a third was a requirement for

teacher education minors in women's studies.

All of the 66 courses had been first offered since 1972 with slightly more having been introduced in the 1978-82 period than in the 1972-77 period. The growth pattern has been continuous and steady.

Forty-nine percent of the courses were offered once a year, 23% twice a year and 2% three times a year; thirteen percent were offered biennially, 8% irregularly while 4% were approved courses but had never been offered. The reported estimated annual enrollment of these courses ranged from 6 to 250 students with most enrollments being in the 10-20 range.

With minimal participation by males, women's studies has been sometimes criticized as a ghetto. Of the five institutions reporting that their women's studies teacher education courses were taught by both women and men, four were institutions which offered more than one course. In three other programs men were the sole assigned instructors for the courses. The remaining reported courses were taught by women.

The emphases of these courses were investigated. Was the emphasis on issues of sexism? Was the emphasis on incorporating women in the curriculum? Was there a balance of these two emphases? Or, were there other emphases? The majority of the respondents indicated that their course reflected a balance of the two emphases. In courses in which the emphasis was on issues of sexism or on incorporating women in the curriculum, more than twice as many respondents indicated

an emphasis on issues of sexism. More than a third of the respondents reported alternative or additional emphases including: instructional methods for nonsexist teaching, historical approaches, women in higher education and nonsexist career development and counseling.

Although field experience has been increasingly valued in both teacher education and women's studies programs, it was either a requirement or an option in only 9 of the total 66 women's studies courses. At one university, field experience was an option which could be designed by the student. Several required field experiences were more oriented to learning about women's lives than to exploring the instructional process. For example, students at one university were required to interview and write a biography of a woman; another required students to interview women of different racial-ethnic backgrounds. Students at one institution observed women's activities in the community. Nonsexist curriculum projects such as designing and presenting curriculum units, inservice programs and media in the field were other requirements. One university reported a two-hour directed observation experience while another required students to investigate particular aspects of sex-roles through utilizing published interview schedules.

Some of the most illuminating responses to the survey instrument were to the question: If your institution does not have a women's studies course in teacher education, could you briefly identify the reason(s)? Of the 52 responses to this question, 60% placed blame on teacher education. They contended

that there had been no interest; women's studies teacher education courses had not been proposed. A frequent reason given was the lack of receptivity and even the resistance to initiative for course development by women's studies programs. One woman rather caustically wrote: "The College of Education as a whole has shown little interest in women's issues, although it employs quite a few." Another frequently mentioned problem was the lack of available education faculty with the appropriate expertise and commitment to teach a women's studies teacher education course. Twenty-nine percent referred to such related problems as low enrollment, retrenchment, and budgetary restrictions as the reasons. Eight percent observed that their education courses were already integrating women's issues or there was a women's studies course outside of teacher education which sufficiently addressed their concerns. Three percent acknowledged that their women's studies program was small, unstable and not yet developed in teacher education.

The survey sought information on women's studies courses outside of teacher education which education students would find especially useful professionally. Of the 47 respondents who offered a women's studies teacher education course, all noted that they offered at least one such course. Of the 64 respondents who did not offer a teacher education course, 59 indicated that they offered a course which they would judge useful to education students. Asked whether education students frequently enrolled in these women's studies courses, the responses of those who offered women's studies courses in

teacher education and those who did not differed. Of those who have offered an education course, an equal number responded "yes" and "no". Four could not provide information. Many of those who have not offered an education course replied that students did not frequently take the course. The ratio of those who did not frequently take the course to those who did was 23:17. Ten were unable to respond.

An examination of the titles of these professionally useful courses suggests the richness of women's studies as a resource for education students. Some typical titles were:

Language and Sex
Institutional Sexism
Sexism and Racism
Sociology of Sex Roles
Sex, Race and Ethnicity: Women in Urban America
Women in American Culture
Psychology of Women
History of American Women

Interestingly, The State University of New York at Albany has just offered for the first time (1982) a women's studies course "Knowledge and Gender," required of all students as part of a new General Education Requirement Program.

These sample women's studies courses illustrate the potential resources available to teacher educators who might seek assistance in developing a women's studies teacher education course or in mainstreaming/integrating women's studies curriculum content into other courses in education.

Many women's studies educators perceive the ultimate goal of women's studies programs as the mainstreaming of women's studies into courses throughout higher education with separate

courses becoming less essential and sometimes unnecessary. Through mainstreaming, a natural and comprehensive approach, more students could be reached than is generally possible in a separate courses curriculum.

The status of mainstreaming in education was investigated in this survey. Forty-nine percent of all respondents indicated that there had been some attempt to mainstream in education. Forty-nine percent reported that there had been no attempt. Two percent did not know. Not surprisingly, those who offered a women's studies teacher education course more frequently reported attempts to mainstream. Sixty-four percent reported attempts while 32% reported no attempts. Four percent did not know. Thirty-seven percent of those who offered no women's studies teacher education courses reported that there had been attempts to mainstream while 63% reported no attempts.

In describing the nature of their mainstreaming, the majority of respondents from both groups mentioned activities by individual faculty members with some commitment to women's issues who incorporated relevant materials in their courses. Other mainstreaming efforts included: a unit on sexism in the schools in an educational psychology course, guest lectures by women's studies faculty, stressing nonsexist approaches in student teacher supervision, a women's studies summer workshop for education faculty, a series of faculty workshop on mainstreaming, acquiring grant funds for mainstreaming in education, faculty seminars in women's studies, contacts with education instructors by women's studies program coordinators

and joint women's studies teacher education committees on mainstreaming. From Michigan State University, it was reported that as a consequence of a Women's Educational Equity Act grant since 1980, there has been mainstreaming of women's equity issues into an elementary preservice program's professional education sequence. As part of their Curriculum Design Project, another WEEAP project, the Women's Studies Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder is teaching students how to teach nonsexist education. Students are assigned to university classes as well as to elementary and secondary ones for their presentations of nonsexist curriculum units.

Respondents who had not attempted mainstreaming were asked about their plans. The majority of those who had done no mainstreaming had no plans. However, those with plans were optimistic and ambitious. A couple of universities were planning institution-wide strategies for women's studies mainstreaming. One respondent expected that this integration would be accomplished for teacher educators through faculty workshops on methods and materials. Similarly, several other institutions planned series of workshops. A few universities were applying for grant funds for this purpose.

The findings that less than one-half of the respondents to this survey offered women's studies courses in teacher education and that few teacher education programs had initiated any mainstreaming with the exception of isolated individuals nor did they foresee any plans for mainstreaming

suggest that this is a serious problem which merits the attention of both women's studies specialists and teacher educators.

In reviewing the reasons which women's studies coordinators/directors offered for there being no women's studies teacher education courses, it is apparent that responsibility needs to be assumed by women's studies and teacher education programs. Although women's studies has historically been housed in and more oriented to the liberal arts curriculum, there can be heightened awareness of the needs and importance of women's studies in teacher education. Teacher educators will sometimes need to take the initiative in requesting assistance from women's studies programs as resources in the development of courses and/or mainstreaming strategies.

The finding that institutions with smaller enrollments less frequently offered women's studies courses in teacher education is comprehensible in that it may be less feasible to offer additional courses in teacher education. However, mainstreaming efforts might be more easily achieved in smaller institutions. For example, Bryn Mawr College reported that they had no need for a separate course because women's studies had been integrated throughout their curriculum.

The finding that few women's studies courses in teacher education included a component of field experience suggests that this is a needed area of curriculum development. Field experiences in public schools, teacher centers, libraries, etc. would not only provide opportunities for students to apply

women's studies theories and knowledge from their classes but it could also be an effective introduction of women's studies into these institutions.

In this report there has been no intent to imply that colleges and universities without women's studies programs cannot develop outstanding women's studies courses in education or mainstream effectively. Teacher education is not dependent upon a formal women's studies program to successfully incorporate women's studies into their curriculum. If a women's studies program is not available, it is imperative that teacher educators independently seek out the wealth of material on sex-equity and women to develop and modify their curriculum. This would also be recommended where women's studies programs exist but do not offer support or assistance to teacher education. However, mutual cooperation between women's studies and teacher education would seem to be the most desirable approach. Both programs would be substantially enhanced by this partnership.

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